

# Legislation Offers Student Loan Relief for Educators in High-Needs Areas

**Educators in high-needs schools and subject areas could get student loan relief under bill from Representative Bentz, Senator Townsend**

**DOVER, Del.** – Governor John Carney, Representative David Bentz, and Senator Bryan Townsend on Tuesday announced new legislation to offer student loan relief to Delaware educators in high-needs schools and subject areas.

The legislation would help the State of Delaware recruit and retain teachers in schools with high concentrations of low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Educators teaching in high-needs subject areas – such as STEM-related fields, special education, and world languages – could also become eligible for student loan repayments.

“We’re focused on helping make sure all Delaware children have access to a high-quality education,” said **Governor Carney**. “That starts with supporting educators who are in the front of the classroom, preparing our students for the future. This legislation would help us recruit and retain educators serving many of our most vulnerable students. Thank you to Representative Bentz, Senator Townsend, and the Delaware State Education Association for their partnership on this issue.”

The legislation would provide up to \$2,000 of student loan assistance annually to educators who qualify. Educators may qualify for up to five years of assistance.

“Dedicated teachers who serve some of our highest-need schools and students deserve recognition for their commitment to future generations,” said **Representative Bentz**, prime sponsor of the legislation. “They are helping students succeed by providing extra assistance and working closely with them. Forgiving some of their loan debt is a small way of showing our commitment to those teachers and the students they educate. By doing this, we will hopefully encourage them to continue their hard work with their students.”

“Teaching is a public service, a professional challenge, and oftentimes a financial sacrifice,” said **Senator Townsend**. “Teachers are the most important investment we can make in the classroom, and the ones who want to work in our highest-need schools shouldn’t have to choose between helping kids tap into their potential and paying their student loans. We owe a lot more to our teachers, but helping them with the albatross of student loan debt is a good start.”

The legislation builds on Governor Carney’s commitment to provide additional resources and support for students and educators in high-needs schools. The Governor’s Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal would provide \$6 million in targeted Opportunity Grant funding for schools serving significant populations of low-income students or English language learners. Governor Carney’s budget also includes a 2 percent pay raise for educators, to help recruit and retain educators statewide. The student loan relief legislation will be introduced this week in the Delaware House of Representatives.

“Our highest need schools, in which our students can most benefit from consistency and teacher experience, struggle to attract and retain educators,” said **Dr. Susan Bunting, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Education**. “This is an important way for us to support those dedicated to working where we need them the most.”

“I love what I do. Being a teacher is the most rewarding job I

have ever had. I want to remain an educator, but the amount of student loan debt I have incurred may force me to get a job that pays enough to cover my living expenses and my student loan debt” said **Von Morgan, Jr., a teacher at Richardson Park Elementary School in Wilmington.** “This bill, if passed, will help keep teachers like me in the classroom where we were meant to be. And it will help us to continue to educate ourselves to meet the ever-growing needs of our students.”

“This bill will help educators of all ages who have student debt and work in our high-needs subject areas and schools,” said **Mike Matthews, President of the Delaware State Education Association.** “It’s another great way to incentivize this work while helping to attract and retain quality educators in Delaware.”

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